(c) the steps being taken by Government to provide STD facilities to all telephone exchanges set up in rural areas of Meghalaya?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Electronic telephone exchanges with STD facilities are being set up at Rymbai, 8th Mile, Shangpung, Balat, Sumer and Rambari during 1999-2000.

(b) Fourteen electronic telephone exchanges with STD facilities were set up during last three years and till date.

(c) To provide STD facilities transmission media like OFC, M/W, MCPC systems are being planned and installed.

**Quasi judicial status of TRAI**

2013. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Telecom Regulatory Authority of India retaining its quasi judicial status after promulgation of the ordinance enjoys exemption from audit objection;

(b) whether the Chairmen of PSUs and CAG have raised serious objection to the aforesaid move; and

(c) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) to (c) No, Sir. However, while the CAG has objected to the exclusion of the tariff setting function from audit's purview, in this connection it is pointed out that under section 23(c) of the TRAI Act 1997, the accounts of TRAI shall be audited by the CAG at such intervals as may be specified by him. This provision empowering the CAG to audit the accounts of TRAI has not been affected by the amendment to section 23(2) of the Act, which has only inserted an explanation for the removal of doubts.

**Non-operational multi access remote relays in Maharashtra**

2014. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that most of the multi access remote relays in the country are non-operational;

(b) the number of MARR units in the country showing O-meter reading especially in the State of Maharashtra and telecom district Yavatmal and what is the status as on today;

(c) whether it is a fact that the investments made for rural connectivity is not being used effectively; and

(d) the status of financial provision maintenance support system especially at Gram Panchayat level?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Out of 201328 MARR Village Public Telephones commissioned in the country, 37939 Village Public Telephones on MARR system are faulty (about 15.17%) as on 31.1.2000.

(b) 37778 nos. of Village Public Telephones on MARR shows O-Meter reading out of total 201328 MARR VPTs commissioned in the country.

For Maharashtra, the status of MARR VPTs showing zero meter reading as on 28.2.2000 is as below:

Maharashtra State —1224
Yavatmal Telecom
District —288

(c) No Sir, investment made for rural connectivity is being used except;

(i) Some MARR VPTs are under disconnection due to non-payment of bills. Action is being taken to re-allocate them.

(ii) Some MARR VPTs are located in Gram Panchayat offices or Branch Post Offices which are kept open for a limited hours.

(iii) Some MARR VPTs which remain faulty for unavoidable reasons.

(d) There are no separate funds allocated for maintenance of MARR Village Public Telephones. These are being maintained from out of the funds allocated for maintenance of exchanges systems.

**Communication facilities in North-Eastern States**

†2015. SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that there is acute shortage of communications facilities in North-Eastern States.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi